



6MINUTES NEWS

9 out of 10 babies exposed to peanuts

Proportion of parents giving infants peanuts is much higher than thought, shows research carried out in Australian general practice

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  0 Comment

Almost nine out of 10 Australian babies have been introduced to peanuts and other food allergens before their first birthdays, a GP-based study shows.

In the research, 86% of 1940 parents replying to the survey (response rate 57%) had adopted updated advice to expose infants early to peanuts and other foods such as dairy and egg.

This was “much higher” than a previous estimate, showing just 30% of infants had eaten peanuts in a survey done in 2011, the authors wrote in the *Medical Journal of Australia*.



Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) guidelines were updated in 2019 to recommend the introduction of common food allergens **in the first year of life** regardless of their allergy risk factors.



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“(The increase) follows major efforts to promote the revised ASCIA guidelines in both the medical and general media,” the WA-based researchers wrote.

Read more: [GP calls for improvements to allergy process](#)

Their study is based on data from a nationwide GP project, trialling **[a text message reporting system called SmartStart Allergy](#)**, developed by Perth GP Dr Alan Leeb.

Dr Leeb was responsible for founding a similar SmartVax vaccine safety program.

Using the allergy app and online questionnaire, researchers obtained the data from parents of 12-month-old infants, attending 69 general practices between September 2018 and May 2019.

They found the following:

- By 12 months, 86% of infants had eaten peanut-containing foods.
- Children with a first-degree relative reported to have a food allergy were less likely to have been introduced to peanuts (81%) than those without a family history.
- Ninety-three per cent of children who did not have a close relative with a food allergy were introduced to peanuts before their first birthday.
- Questionnaire responses showed 13% of parents reported food-related reactions in their children.
- Dairy was the food most frequently reported as causing a reaction (8.6% of exposed infants) followed by peanut-related reactions (2.6%).
- Ninety-seven of 250 parent-reported reactions to food (39%) did not include symptoms that suggested an IgE-mediated allergic reaction.

More information: [MJA 2020](#)

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